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ABSTRACT

Seeking to provide information for students and teachers on reasons for studying Russian, this pamphlet discusses five major areas: (1) nature of the subject itself, (2) place of Russian in a liberal arts curriculum, (3) a history of Russian studies in the United States, (4) career opportunities, and (5) a brief survey of the teaching of Russian at both the college and secondary school levels. Names and addresses of professional organizations and periodical publications are furnished in the appendix. (RL)

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WHY STUDY RUSSIAN?

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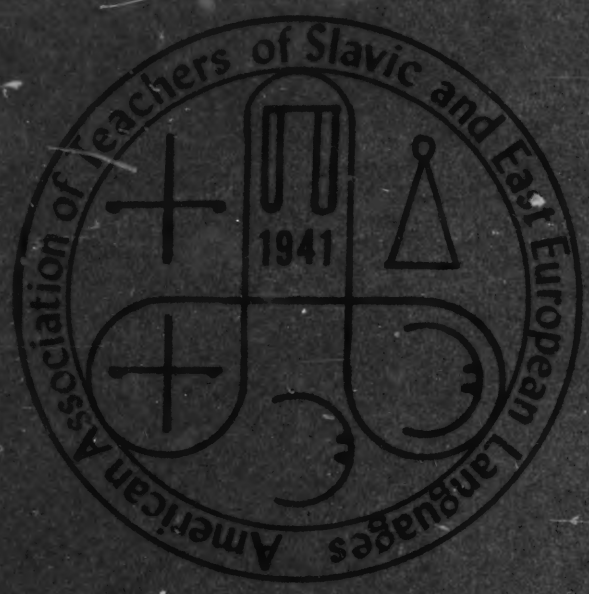

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SOME AATSEEL ANSWERS...

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answers the question:

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WHY STUDY RUSSIAN?

PREFACE

The importance of the Russian language and the significance of Russian culture in the world today are rarely disputed. Yet, the study of Russian is a relative new-comer in the curricula of our educational institutions. Counselling in Russian is frequently inadequate, since information on the subject is scattered and sometimes not readily available.

This pamphlet is designed to provide information which may be helpful to both students and teachers of Russian and to those whose responsibility is to advise students in the choice of a career. The nature of the subject itself, the place of Russian in a liberal arts curriculum, the history of Russian studies in the U.S.A., and available career opportunities for students of Russian are discussed in this pamphlet. There is also a brief survey of the development of the teaching of Russian at both the college and secondary school levels.

At the present time the practical application of the Russian language includes a broad range of career opportunities. A knowledge of Russian is an indispensable tool for many positions in the Federal Government, in private businesses, in library work, in research institutions dealing with the social or natural sciences, and to a growing extent in the field of mass media. There is of course a well-recognized need for qualified Russian teachers at all educational levels.

Beyond the immediate vocational value of studying Russian, one must not forget that the study of Russian as a purely cultural experience, particularly through the vehicle of Russian literature, is richly rewarding. The great literary works furnish vital insights into the background and culture of Russia and better enable the student to understand present Soviet society and the Russian people.

The brief appendix to this article, as well as Albert Parry's *America Learns Russian, A History of the Teaching of the Russian Language in the United States,* may be of use to those who desire further information concerning the development and present status of Russian studies in the United States.

Helen B. Yakobson
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Washington, D. C.

WHY STUDY RUSSIAN?

Unprecedented political, social, economic, and technological changes occurring in our times have sharply increased the interdependence of the world's peoples and the need for exchange of information, person-to-person contact, and knowledge of foreign cultures.

There are approximately 3,000 languages in the world, of which 130 are spoken by more than one million people each, and seventy by more than five million. In this bewildering maze of languages, each nation chooses the foreign languages most important for its national economic and political life. In establishing priorities in the learning of foreign languages in the U.S.A., one must not underestimate the importance of studying Russian. It is a language spoken by 220 million people in the Soviet Union, and it ranks with English and Chinese as one of the three major world languages.

In our world today the Soviet Union plays a major role in international affairs and presents a challenge to our system of government. The current political struggle with the Soviet Union requires that we keep ourselves informed about all aspects of Soviet life. Thus, a knowledge of Russian can no longer be confined to a mere handful of specialists. It is apparent that the Soviet government fully realizes the necessity of communicating with people of other nations in their own language. For many years now it has been training foreign language experts not only among its diplomats, but among scientists and technicians as well. There is, of course, a growing awareness among American educators of the pressing need to make the general public understand the past and present culture of the Russian people, as well as to realize the nature of the challenge presented by the Soviet system of government.

Even if we wanted to forget the pressures of international politics, we must not forget that the Russian language is the vehicle of one of the great literatures of all time and, with the Russian scientists producing 28% of the world's scientific literature, Russian is increasingly the vehicle of vital technological information.

THE HISTORY OF THE TEACHING OF RUSSIAN AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

The teaching of Russian at the college level has an interesting history. It begins with the pioneering work of Professors Wiener

and Cross of Harvard, where the first college course in Russian was offered in 1896. Professor Noyes' dedicated efforts at the Berkeley campus of the University of California resulted in the introduction of Russian courses there in 1901. In 1902, the University of Chicago became the third university to institute the study of Russian in its curriculum. In 1908, another Midwestern school, the University of Michigan, initiated a beginning course in Russian and added a second course in Russian literature the following year.

With the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent increase in interest in the Russian nation and culture, Russian first appeared in the curricula of Columbia University, Stanford University, Pennsylvania State University, Dartmouth College, and Georgetown University. However, despite these brave beginnings and inspired teachings of a few isolated Slavic scholars, our leading Russian specialists, Charles Bohlen and George Kennan, were sent to Paris and London to receive their training in the 1920's. In spite of the addition of Russian language courses on several more campuses, by 1939 only 19 American universities offered Russian; less than half a dozen had formal Slavic or Russian Departments; only three American universities could offer doctoral programs in the Slavic languages.

The turning point in the development of Russian studies came during World War II with the establishment by the military of intensive Russian language courses on more than thirty campuses. These programs covered not only language, but also history, geography, literature, sociology, economics, and politics. A 1946 survey indicated that 190 academic institutions were teaching Russian—quite a change from 1939! During the decade of 1958-1968, enrollment in Russian courses in universities and colleges doubled and reached the 1967-68 figure of 31,726 students. By 1968, one could find Russian courses in all the states of the Union.

RUSSIAN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

One striking indication of the public readiness for Russian language study is the growth in the number of secondary schools with Russian language programs in the regular curriculum. In the secondary school, the total U.S. enrollment in Russian courses tripled in the years 1960-1965. This growth was most dramatic in the Great Lakes region, with an increase from 1,928 students in 1960 to 13,194 students in 1965. The Midwest had the second

highest regional enrollment with 7,902 junior high and high school students taking Russian courses in 1965. In this region, incidentally, Minnesota pioneered the teaching of Russian in 1944. The Far West has an enrollment of over 3,000 seventh through twelfth grade students. New England, the Plains states, the Southeast, and the Rocky Mountain all have enrollments over 1,000. The Southwest, which has an enrollment of less than 1,000 has tripled its enrollment since 1960, and continues to show signs of increase.

It is quite clear that Russian programs in secondary schools have made a noteworthy start and are receiving active support from the community and from school administrations. The College Board Achievement Examination in Russian, given for the first time in the spring of 1961, demonstrated very good results in high school language instruction. Student interest is growing and most students continue their language study in college.

RUSSIAN IN THE LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM

There is no doubt that Russian culture merits inclusion in liberal arts courses of study. The best examples of Russian culture are found, of course, in Russian literature, which has enriched the entire world's literary heritage. Unfortunately, as in the case of most translations, Russian prose and particularly poetry lose much of their beauty and meaning in English. Only the original Russian can convey in full the nuances of thoughts and feelings in these literary masterpieces, providing a key to genuine understanding. Anyone seriously interested in Russian literature but having to rely on translation is restricted in two ways: first, because only the more popular Classics are available in translation and, second, because of the considerable delay in bringing the recent work of Soviet writers to the attention of the reading public.

A knowledge of Russian also opens exciting vistas for studies in comparative literature; such Russian authors as Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and others have had a very strong influence on American and Western European writing.

With greater opportunities available now for travel and study in the Soviet Union, more and more people will need to know and use the language for graduate study and research. The United States already suffers from a serious handicap in graduate student and faculty exchange; there is a lack of qualified applicants in this country for exchange with the USSR. Students who begin their study of Russian early and maintain their interest in it are certain

to be sufficiently fluent by the time they finish college to be eligible for academic exchange with the USSR.

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

More students would undoubtedly take Russian were it not for the popular misconception concerning the special difficulties of the language. The Russian language is a member of the Indo-European family of languages and is thus related to English, French, German and the other commonly taught Western European languages.

Russian belongs to the Slavic group of languages, which is divided into: *Western*–Polish, Czech, Slovak; *Southern*–Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian; and *Eastern*–Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian.

The present Russian alphabet contains 33 letters, about half of which closely approximate the Latin. Still others are familiar to us from Greek letter fraternities and sororities. Grammatically, literary Russian more closely resembles Latin and Old Greek than the Romance and Germanic languages. Russian syntax, however, is closer to the modern Western European languages. In some respects, Russian may even be considered easier than many languages taught in our schools. The Russian writing system represents the spoken language much more consistently than, let us say, English or French. There are no combinations of letters to represent one sound such as: "ou." ' eau," "ee," "ea," etc. And in Russian, one would never encounter the same letter combination pronounced differently in different words: "rough," "dough," "through," etc.

Modern spoken Russian word order is less rigid than that of French, German, or English. For example: one can say "My brother reads at home" as well as "At home reads my brother" or "My brother at home reads."

In its lexicon, Russian has many "international" words, such as "mashina," "radio," "telefon," or "doktor," which are readily recognizable to an English-speaking person and which simplify the process of vocabulary building.

Many students of Russian have found that, as they advance in their studies, they soon observe a definite pattern in their acquired vocabulary. By breaking down words into their component parts, they soon learn how to develop a great many derivatives and compounds from a single root, thus considerably enlarging their store of words and gaining greater experience.

RUSSIAN IN YOUR CAREER

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The U.S today has new responsibilities all over the globe and there is at last a realization that Americans have been handicapped in their international relations by neglecting foreign language training. We were shocked to discover that Soviet diplomatic agents are so well trained in foreign languages that they can go among those people of the world for whose friendship and cooperation the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union are competing and deal with them directly in their native language.

Not only does the State Department train its own foreign service officers in a special institute, but numerous federal agencies maintain their own foreign language programs in which special attention is given to Russian. It is clear that considerable government expenditures for training these men and women could be avoided if these employees had sufficient language background before assuming their jobs.

The Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the U.S. Information Office and the Library of Congress employ the greatest number of translators. Most federal positions are filled through Civil Service examinations and personal interviews. To apply for a position as interpreter or translator–a most interesting and demanding job–one must be thoroughly qualified in both languages and be able to handle both Russian-to-English and English-to-Russian material.

U.S. government representatives in the USSR certainly need competency in the Russian language to handle embassy operations and diplomatic functions. Many government agencies maintain research staffs trained in Russian. Congressional committees and individual members of Congress often need the services of translators, interpreters, and researchers with a command of Russian. Thus, anyone interested in government service would do very well to acquire a knowledge of the Russian language.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

The demand by private business for persons with a knowledge of foreign languages is increasing steadily. More and more trade and travel are taking place now between the United States and the USSR, and business corporations are increasingly aware of the importance of hiring personnel trained to speak and write the language of their customers. Without a doubt, anyone preparing for a business career can profit by a knowledge of Russian. Many

import-export houses, industrial concerns, and agricultural organizations have international programs, and they offer many job opportunities for persons able to handle source material in Russian and to communicate with Russian visitors when necessary. Looking ahead to a world where Russia and the United States will coexist peacefully, one can predict that trade, travel, and more normal business relations will be established. In the words of the financial correspondent of the *Washington Post,* J.A. Livingston, "Educators need to look ahead 20 or 30 years. A secretary who can bang away on a Russian character typewriter will be at a premium, so will a scientist, engineer, or businessman who can read Russian journals in the original and converse fluently with his Russian vis-à-vis..."

Presently in the U.S. there are also a great many research institutes, councils, and foundations which emphasize international programs. Some of them concentrate on research and publication, among them language texts and translation series in various areas; some sponsor and finance international centers, summer institutes and teacher-training programs, and arrange for scholarship grants for research abroad; others promote social projects, aid to refugees, and vocational training.

In the field of research, the most important is the international aspect of scientific research.

CAREERS IN SCIENCE

In importance in world science Russian now surpasses German and French. It is second only to English as the language of science and technology. Twenty-eight percent of the scientific literature in the world is published in Russian at the present time. Despite Soviet secretiveness about most things, Russian scientists publish much of the results of their research just as American scientists do; however, while many Russian scientists are able to read the published reports of our scientists and make full and effective use of our scientific findings, most of American scientists are not capable of reading the Russian publications. For this reason, American scientists are often ignorant of scientific progress in the Soviet Union and waste time and money duplicating work already performed there. The National Science Foundation estimates that not more than four to five percent of all American scientists can read Russian effectively.

A relatively small number of Soviet scientific periodicals are now translated or abstracted in English, at exorbitant cost. Mr.

Melville J. Ruggles, vice president of the Council on Library Resources, Inc., has estimated that the total annual cost of translating all important Russian publications would come to $25 million. In 1960, the U.S. Government paid out $1.5 million for translation projects and yet only five percent of the Russian output in science was translated. Scientific translations are only usable when done by experts in the field. But where would one find a nuclear physicist or biochemist who would want to leave his own research in order to translate Russian scientific publications?

The ineffectiveness and limited application of inadequately translated scientific material and the high cost of such work could be avoided if more Russian instruction were provided in our schools. Students interested in careers in science would do well to acquire a knowledge of basic Russian in high school, so that they could use Russian source material in college, for graduate work, and for research. Opportunities in scientific translation are thus a definite career possibility.

EDUCATION

The lack of qualified teachers restricts the growth of Russian language studies at all educational levels. Such a wide gap between the supply and demand for Russian teachers indicates fine career opportunities, allowing for choice of geographical location and excellent salaries.

To teach Russian one must, in addition to language proficiency, have a well-balanced education, a knowledge of pedagogy, psychology, and general teaching methods. A successful teaching career also demands certain personal qualities: ability to relate to people, patience, and an enlightened understanding of Russian people and their culture.

College teaching usually requires a higher level of education and training than does secondary school teaching and anyone planning for an academic career should plan on working towards a Ph.D. degree.

Teaching candidates in elementary and secondary schools are expected to meet the teacher certification requirements established by the state where they are planning to work.

In addition to the usual fringe benefits associated with the teaching profession such as time for summer travel, study, and research, the field of Russian gives the teacher the rewarding satisfaction of teaching a subject which is of considerable use and importance for the future of the learner.

LIBRARY

A great need for skilled linguists exists in our national library system. Nineteen out of thirty-three accredited library schools in this country require a knowledge of a foreign language for certification. While bigger city libraries have always needed personnel with a knowledge of Russian, the most acute need for such experts today is felt in university libraries because of the rapid growth of their Slavic collections. Students of Russian would do well to consider the broad opportunities for advancement in library work in planning a career. The expansion of graduate programs will intensify university needs for a library staff competent in Russian.

COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

Newspapers, periodicals, radio, and television—all these communications media play increasingly important roles in the life of modern society. Because of the improved technology of communications, a knowledge of the Russian language is important not only for the foreign correspondent stationed abroad, but for home office personnel as well. They must be able to discern properly the nuances contained in messages from abroad, and prepare background reports based upon the original sources. And, since the USSR occupies so much space on the front pages of the press it is crucial that we have professionally trained experts capable of reading and analyzing Soviet press sources.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the United States Information Agency's Voice of America offer many interesting career opportunities for the student of Russian: research, script-writing, editing, translating, and announcing.

News bureaus of large national radio and television broadcasting companies always need researchers competent in Russian as well as occasional interpreters for on-the-spot coverage of events. Even the radio and television broadcasters of today find it to be an asset to be able to pronounce and spell Russian words and phrases.

TRAVEL

Summer travel and study opportunities for secondary and college-level students are ever on the increase. Also, the cultural exchange programs agreed upon by the United States and the USSR in 1958 provide for a wide range of exchanges in cultural, technical, and educational fields. Students competent in Russian may find many

opportunities for traveling in the USSR and for serving as interpreters in the touring exhibits which the United States sends to the Soviet Union. Other exchanges take place between athletic teams, industrial or trade delegations, and educational groups. Exchange visits are arranged for ballet, opera, and theater companies, symphony orchestras, and choral groups. It is obvious that any member of such an American group touring the USSR would benefit greatly from a knowledge of the language. Through language competency comes the ability to establish the needed rapport for "people-to-people diplomacy." In the case of Soviet Russia, language comprehension acquires particular importance, since Soviet interpreters practice constant political censorship. The American visitor to the Soviet Union who knows Russian has a great advantage over his fellow American who does not know the language in uncensored people-to-people contact.

With the establishment of direct air routes between the U.S. and the USSR, there is obviously a need for airlines personnel trained in Russian. With the increasing flow of Russian visitors to this country, there is a further need for clerical and administrative personnel to handle the tourist trade. Thus, anyone looking forward to a career in tourism, transportation, or travel accommodations would find a knowledge of Russian invaluable.

APPENDIX

I. The names and addresses of the following organizations may be helpful to readers.

A. *The American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages,* (AATSEEL) the only professional organization representing the teachers of Russian and other Slavic and East European languages on all educational levels; was founded in 1941. The national organization has 24 state chapters serving various regions. AATSEEL publishes a quarterly journal, *The Slavic and East European Journal* which meets the need for a professional journal for scholars and teachers in the field of Russian language and literature by providing theoretical and practical approaches to language and literature instruction on all educational levels. Correspondence should be addressed to: Joe Malik, Jr., University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, 85721. The association also publishes a newsletter 4-6 times annually to keep the Russian scholar informed of recent events in the field. The Newsletter's character is lively and informal and includes such topics as newly established programs at various schools, publications of interest to teachers, and summer programs of study and travel. It prints guest articles on methodology and reports on successful teacher experiences and short stories, cartoons, and articles from Russian periodicals are sometimes added. Correspondence may be addressed to AATSEEL'S NEWSLETTER, St. Louis University High School, 4970 Oakland Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63110.

B. *American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* publishes a quarterly *Slavic Review* devoted to Soviet and East European studies. This journal will be of particular interest to students of Russian and Soviet area studies. Information is available through Professor Donald Treadgold, 508 Thompson Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98105.

C. *The Russian Studies Center of Secondary Schools,* the Andrew Mellon Library, The Choate School, Wallingford, Connecticut, Director: Johannes Van Straalen, publishes a bibliography of materials available in the Russian Studies Center and a newsletter. The Center has accumulated a large collection of books in the Russian field and maintains a lending library and study center for teachers.

D. *Dobro Slovo,* the National Slavic Honor Society was founded in January, 1964. The name of the Society, "DOBRO SLOVO" which

in Old Slavic means the "good word." The purpose of "Dobro Slovo" is to recognize excellence in the study of Slavic languages and literatures on the undergraduate level. It offers a means of student recognition and a stimulus to greater academic achievement. The qualifications for membership are as follows: (1) A minimum of 12 semester hours of a Slavic language and/or literature on the college level. (2) A minimum academic average of 3.5 in the preceding 6 semester hours of Slavic language and literature study. (3) A minimum academic average of 3.0 in all academic courses of study. As of June, 1968, Dobro Slovo had 41 chapters, with a total membership of 1117. Correspondence may be addressed to Professor John E. Allen III, Secretary-Treasurer, Slavic Department, New York University, New York, N.Y. 10003. One may also write to any of the four regional area representatives: Region I, based at the University of Pennsylvania, Morton Benson; Region II, the George Washington University, Mrs. Helen B. Yakobson; Region III, Indiana University, Maurice Friedberg; and Region IV, University of Arizona, Joe Malik, Jr.

E. *The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages* is an organization of all teachers of foreign language, regardless of educational level. Although the organization was originally sponsored by the Modern Language Association, it now is an autonomous body and meets at different times from the MLA. The American Council meets annually at Thanksgiving and moves the location of its meeting from year to year to each section of the country, from the South to the West to the Midwest to the East. The organization publishes *Foreign Language Annals*, a quarterly dedicated to advancing all phases of the profession of foreign language teaching. It seeks to serve as a chronicle of information of current significance to the teacher, administrator, or researcher. Correspondence should be addressed to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

II. Periodical Publications of Importance to the Student of Russian.

A. *Vedomosti* "The News," is a round-robin, prepared and edited by the Department of Russian of Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; J. William Frey. It publishes articles in both English and Russian and brings to the reader the current news of his field. It reprints articles from Soviet publications and adds its own editorial comments.

B. *Russian Language Journal,* The journal prints articles in English and Russian, placing emphasis on methods and other problems connected with the teaching of Russian. The editor: Valdimir I. Grebenschikov, A-729 Wells Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.